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SIPDIS

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TAGS: [KPAO](#) [SOCI](#) [MU](#)

SUBJECT: OMAN ONLINE: DRUG USE, WORK IN IRAQ, AND HINDUS IN OMAN

1. Summary: The Omani Internet chat room "Sablat al-Arab" -- or simply "Al-Sablah" -- is the liveliest and most comprehensive Arabic-language forum for political and social discourse in the country, touching on issues and personalities rarely addressed in the conventional media. While not totally free, nor wholly reflective of Omani public opinion, Al-Sablah nevertheless offers a worthwhile window into the hot topics and unvarnished views of the day. This edition of Oman Online contains the following topics:

--- Drug use/trafficking in Oman
--- Ministry of Manpower Warns against Iraq
--- Hindus in Oman

End summary.

High On Oman

2. Al-Sablah members expressed concern that the government may not be doing enough to control drug trafficking in Oman. One member stated, "We wonder what steps the government is taking to control drug trafficking and use." Another urged the government to "initiate a media campaign to warn the public of the dangers of drug use and explain how one becomes addicted." Still another wrote, "There should be strategies to treat drug addicts." Other participants stated that the drug problem in Oman is not hard drugs, but the use of household items to get high. One Al-Sablah subscriber commented, "The use of things like medicine, perfumes, creams, and body lotions to escape reality is of most concern here in Oman."

No To Jobs In Iraq

3. The Ministry of Manpower recently published notices in the major dailies warning Omanis that the high level of violence in Iraq made it inadvisable to travel to that country in search of employment. An Al-Sablah subscriber commented on the notice, "We appreciate the Ministry's deep concern for our lives, but we ask ourselves why are many Omanis attracted to the offers of work in Iraq." Some members doubted that any Omanis would be willing to go to Iraq, while others stated, "Traveling to Iraq would be an act of infidels." According to one participant, "Anyone that goes to Iraq to work with coalition forces should be ashamed of himself for supporting the crusaders against Muslims." Others supported the announcement writing, "Any step taken by the Ministry to save the lives of Omanis should be supported."

Integrating Hindus

4. Al-Sablah also raised the issue of Hindu expatriates in Oman. "How can we allow ourselves to live with Hindus and permit them to build temples in our country?" asked one participant. Another subscriber stated, "Hindus are not loyal to their own communities. If they were, they would not have emigrated to our shores. If they obtain Omani nationality, they will not be loyal to this country." However, a majority of the participants expressed sympathy for Hindu expatriates by stating, "These people left India a long time ago. They have integrated themselves into Omani society." Another member wrote, "In most regions you will find Hindus and Omanis coming together to celebrate weddings and mourn at funerals. Surely, they are part of this society." Other writers commented, "Hindus are very efficient and hardworking. Their shops are open from the early morning to late at night, and you do not have to worry about them cheating you."

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